



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Public Accounts

Tuesday, October 21, 2025
9 a.m.

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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP), Chair
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC), Deputy Chair

Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)
Ellingson, Court, Calgary-Foothills (NDP)
Johnson, Jennifer, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)*
Lunty, Brandon G., Leduc-Beaumont (UC)
McDougall, Myles, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Sawyer, Tara, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC)**
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)

* substitution for Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk

** substitution for Myles McDougall

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Patty Hayes	Assistant Auditor General
Tej Deol	Principal

Support Staff

Shannon Dean, KC	Clerk
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Philip Massolin	Clerk Assistant and Executive Director of Parliamentary Services
Nancy Robert	Clerk of <i>Journals</i> and Committees
Abdul Bhurgri	Research Officer
Rachel McGraw	Research Officer
Warren Huffman	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Aaron Roth	Committee Clerk
Rhonda Sorensen	Manager of Corporate Communications
Christina Steenbergen	Supervisor of Communications Services
Amanda LeBlanc	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

9 a.m.

Tuesday, October 21, 2025

[Mr. Sabir in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. I would like to call this meeting of the Public Accounts Committee to order and welcome everyone in attendance.

My name is Irfan Sabir, the MLA for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall and chair of the committee. I would invite members, guests, and LAO staff at the table to introduce themselves.

Mr. Rowswell: Garth Rowswell, MLA, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. Lundy: Good morning, everyone. Brandon Lundy, MLA, Leduc-Beaumont.

Ms Hayes: Good morning, everyone. Patty Hayes, Assistant Auditor General.

Mr. Tej Deol: Hello, everyone. Tej Deol. I'm an engagement leader with the Auditor General's office.

Ms Govindarajan: Vani Govindarajan, Parliamentary Counsel.

Ms Robert: Good morning, everyone. Nancy Robert, clerk of *Journals* and committees.

Mr. Huffman: Good morning. Warren Huffman, committee clerk.

The Chair: We will now go to those joining us online. Please introduce yourself as I call your name.

Mr. Schmidt: Marlin Schmidt, Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, St. Albert.

Ms Lovely: Good morning. MLA Jackie Lovely from the Camrose constituency.

Mrs. Sawyer: Good morning. Tara Sawyer for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, filling in for Minister Myles McDougall.

Mrs. Johnson: MLA Jennifer Johnson, Lacombe-Ponoka.

Ms de Jonge: Good morning. MLA Chantelle de Jonge, Chestermere-Strathmore.

Mr. Ellingson: Good morning. MLA Court Ellingson, Calgary-Foothills.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will note for the record the following substitutions: Ms Lovely for hon. Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk and Mrs. Sawyer for hon. Mr. McDougall.

A few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff. Committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Assembly TV. The audio- and videostream and transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website. Those participating by videoconference are encouraged to please turn on your camera while speaking and mute your microphone when not speaking. Members participating virtually who wish to be placed on a speakers list are asked to e-mail or send a message to the committee clerk; they could also use the raise hand function. Members in the room are asked to please signal to the chair or the clerk. Please set your cellphone and other

devices to silent for the duration of the meeting. Comments should flow through the chair at all times.

Next we have approval of the agenda. Hon. members, are there any changes or additions to the agenda? Seeing none, would a member like to move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts approve the proposed agenda as distributed for its October 21, 2025, meeting?

Mr. Lundy: I'll move.

The Chair: Any discussion on the motion? Seeing none, all in favour in the room? Any opposed in the room? All in favour joining us online? Anyone opposed? The motion is carried.

We also have draft minutes from the October 14, 2025, meeting of the committee. Do members have any errors or omissions to note? Seeing none, would a member like to move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts approve the minutes as distributed of its meeting held on October 14, 2025?

Mr. Lundy: I'll move.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any discussion on the motion? Seeing none, all in favour in the room? Anyone opposed in the room? Those joining us online, all in favour? Anyone opposed? That motion is carried.

Now we have a review of the Processes to Assess and Manage the Condition of Affordable Housing report on the agenda. At our last meeting the committee reviewed the Auditor General's Processes to Assess and Manage the Condition of Affordable Housing report. Today we are here to deliberate on any recommendations the committee would like to make to the Assembly. As members may know, Standing Order 53(2) states that the government shall respond to a report of the Public Accounts Committee within 150 days of the date on which the committee reports.

With that, I will open the floor for discussion and any motions relating to the Auditor General's affordable housing report that the committee wishes to make. Member Marlin Schmidt.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do have a motion that I would like to introduce, and I believe that Parliamentary Counsel has a copy of that, if they could bring that up on the screen.

Mr. Huffman: Sorry. Which motion? Could you start reading, and I can post it?

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. Thanks, Warren.

I move that

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts urge the Ministry of Assisted Living and Social Services to implement all of the recommendations arising from the Auditor General's Processes to Assess and Manage the Condition of Affordable Housing report by the end of the '25-26 fiscal year and report back to the committee on the implementation of those recommendations prior to August 2026.

Mr. Huffman: I'm just getting that posted right now.

The Chair: Can all members see the motion?

Go ahead, MLA Schmidt.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm bringing forward this motion because when we met with Assisted Living and Social Services to discuss the Auditor General's report on affordable housing, it was quite clear that they have at least started a bunch of the work that the Auditor General had recommended that the department do. The problem is that they don't seem to be intent on

finishing it. We heard about several different reviews and interim measures that are in place to allocate capital maintenance and renewal dollars and assess facility conditions. My impression from the discussion with the department is that they have everything that they need in place to meet the Auditor's recommendations relatively quickly, much more quickly than the timeline that they recommended of the end of March of 2027, and they just need to get on with it.

I think it's the proper role of this committee to push the department to do what it says it's going to do but in a much more rapid fashion. You know, the Auditor General in their report and in their media release indicated that this could be a significant health and safety risk to the people who inhabit the affordable housing that the province owns, and we cannot wait for the department to implement these recommendations by 2027. There's too much at stake in terms of health and human safety, and that's why I'm bringing forward this motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Member Schmidt.

Is there anybody else that wants to weigh in?

9:10

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah, I'll have a chat.

The Chair: Go ahead, MLA Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you. After reflection on the discussions on October 14 and a thorough review of the department's status report on outstanding recommendations, it's pretty clear that substantial progress is going on and that they have accepted all the recommendations and the Auditor General has accepted that they are moving forward on those recommendations. Given that momentum, I think there are no further recommendations necessary at this time.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Rowswell.

Is there anyone else wishing to speak? Member Schmidt.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. If I could just respond to Mr. Rowswell's comments. You know, it's common practice – and all members of Public Accounts know this because we've seen this happen time and again – that various departments accept the Auditor General's recommendations and then fail to actually implement them in a timely manner.

I just want to remind Mr. Rowswell and all members of the committee that one of the reasons that we started these Auditor General report-focused meetings is to use the Public Accounts Committee to press the departments to do better. If that was our intent, here's an excellent opportunity for us to use this committee to push the department to do a better job than it has been doing, and we are failing to do it. You know, it's a real shame that the people who wanted to hold these Auditor General focused meetings are now just walking away from delivering on the thing that they said that they wanted to do by holding these meetings in the first place.

I urge Mr. Rowswell and all of the other members of the committee to consider this motion and vote in favour and show that the Public Accounts Committee can do something to improve the operation of the department.

The Chair: Is there anybody else wanting to speak?

Seeing none, I will go to the question. All those in favour of this motion in the room? All those opposed to the motion in the room? We'll go online. All those in favour of the motion online? All those against the motion online?

That motion is defeated.

Do we have any other comments, discussions, or motions that members wish to move at this time?

Mr. Rowswell: Yes. I have a motion.

The Chair: Go ahead, Garth.

Mr. Rowswell: I move that

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts conclude its review of the Auditor General's Processes to Assess and Manage the Condition of Affordable Housing report and make no recommendations and therefore no report to the Assembly.

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there any discussion on the motion?

Mr. Rowswell: Like I said, the Auditor General's report on affordable housing is comprehensive and clear with actionable recommendations which the department is doing and in a time that's acceptable to the Auditor General.

The other part is, you know, the system – there was a media release that created a problem and kind of abused what we had agreed to, which was to deliberate and make recommendations. It was disappointing to see a media release go out in advance of our meeting. Given that we would just make no recommendations and given that the Auditor General and the department seem to be on the same page, I think there's no need to report at this time.

The Chair: I see Member Schmidt. Go ahead, Member Schmidt.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, you know, I take issue with Member Rowswell's characterization of our caucus's media release as the reason that we can't have the department report on this. That's wrong. I'm sorry that the member is surprised that politicians will engage in politics around the work that the government is doing.

Regardless, the 2027 timeline should not be acceptable to anyone here on this committee. You know, I just want to reflect on something that I heard from the members who came back from the public accounts conference in Regina a few weeks ago. The former members of the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee warned against taking the department's word for it when they said that they would do something. In fact, I heard that one of the former members said that the department officials refer to people like us on public accounts committees as the temps, you know, that they just wait us out until membership on the committee invariably turns over and people forget about it and the department goes on its merry old way.

Like I said, we have an opportunity to show that we are committed to making government work better, and we have the power to do that. I don't think that members should just let us be pushed around by the department and just take their word for it that they're going to do what they say that they're going to do. We need to hold them accountable, and I'm really disappointed that it seems like the government members are walking away from that responsibility.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Member Schmidt.

I saw Member Renaud's hand earlier.

Ms Renaud: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I just want to add on to what my colleague Member Schmidt said. You know, I think we have another opportunity to introduce more accountability to an area that's incredibly important. We understand that housing is a crisis in Alberta, and we're just going back to the same old, you know: no, we're not going to do it because you did something bad. I mean,

that's sort of ridiculous. This is about accountability to the people of Alberta, and this is an incredible opportunity to push, in a way, to use the tools at our disposal to push for more accountability and get this work done properly. It's unfortunate that the first opportunity that we have to be essentially nonpartisan is just thrown out the window. It's really sad.

The Chair: Is there anybody else wanting to speak?

Seeing none, I'll call the question on this motion. All those in favour in the room? Anybody opposed in the room? Go online. All those in favour joining us online? All those opposed?

Motion is carried.

Is there any other discussion on the report?

Mr. Rowswell: I have another motion. That the Standing Committee on . . .

The Chair: Stop. Deputy Chair, before you I saw Member Schmidt's hand.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. Sorry.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do have another motion that I'd like to bring forward.

The Chair: Member Schmidt, I think – go ahead.

9:20

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. I want to make sure that everybody understands that this is a motion that's independent of the decisions that the committee has already made. This motion that I'm moving is that

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommend that the Ministry of Assisted Living and Social Services submit to the committee . . .

That's the Public Accounts Committee

. . . biannually a detailed implementation plan of all of the Auditor General's recommendations set out in the Processes to Assess and Manage the Condition of Affordable Housing report related to that ministry until all of the recommendations have been implemented.

The Chair: Thank you, Member Schmidt. Given the previous motion brought forward by the deputy chair, MLA Rowswell, which states that the committee makes no recommendation, your motion will not be in order.

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Chair, I really challenge your decision. I do believe that this motion is in order.

The Chair: I think if you're challenging my decision, then there is a section in the standing orders. The decision again will go to the majority of the committee, and I can put the question before the committee. That's the only question I'm supposed to ask according to the rules. Should the chair's ruling stand? All those in favour in the room?

Mr. Lundy: We're voting on the chair's ruling that Schmidt's motion is out of . . .

Mr. Rowswell: Oh, I see.

The Chair: Anybody opposed in the room? All those in favour joining us online? Anybody opposed joining us online?

I think the chair's ruling stands.

We're back on the report. Is there any other discussion on the report?

Mr. Rowswell: Yes. I have another motion.

The Chair: Go ahead, MLA Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you. I move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts cancel the audit-focused meeting scheduled for November 18, 2025.

The Chair: I understand it. Okay. Go ahead, MLA Rowswell. I can see the text of the motion.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. Okay. Thank you. I think what we've had here is that we were trying to do collaboration. Again I go back to the disappointment of making media releases prior to this meeting. The best place to do this is collaboration in a deliberation meeting. The audit-focused meetings were to be a trial process to see how things do. My concern is that, given what we're experiencing here, it's going to be just turned into a politicized event. I just think that until we can operate properly, we should just cancel this one and review it in the future.

The Chair: Any other discussion on the motion? MLA Schmidt.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. I would ask Member Rowswell to explain in detail exactly what he thinks went wrong and under what conditions would it be necessary for the members of the government to decide to continue with this process.

The Chair: MLA Rowswell, then MLA Renaud.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. Like, we had a process, and it was abused. The trust was broken. I just feel that the consequences of that make it difficult to go ahead and expect that this is going to work properly. That's where it's at.

The Chair: MLA Renaud.

Ms. Renaud: Thanks, Mr. Chair. It's unfortunate that we're continuing to play these political games. Clearly, you know, there's been a change since the last meeting and this one. I don't know what the powers that be have decided they like or don't like, but this isn't about how members of this committee feel; this is about accountability to the people of Alberta. Housing is an important issue. This was about shedding some light on an area that is clearly in need of light, as we heard from the Auditor General's office. This is absolutely ridiculous that we're playing politics like this. That's all I have.

The Chair: MLA Schmidt, do you want to make further comments?

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah, I do. Thank you. Just a reminder for everybody on the committee, the Auditor General focused report that we reviewed was related to public housing. The Auditor General flagged serious potential risks to the health and safety of the residents. You know, these are people whose landlord is the province of Alberta, and they face potential health and safety risks in housing that we are providing to them. We want the department who has that responsibility to execute on their obligations to do better, and the members of the government are deciding not to do that because their feelings were hurt by a press release.

Then the next meeting was supposed to be about child care subsidies and whether or not those were going to the right places. We're in the middle of an affordability crisis, and we want to make sure that the department is upholding its obligations to make sure that people who need child care can afford it. The members of the

government said: “You know what? I didn’t like that press release, so we’re going to stop doing that work.”

I urge the members of the government to put their hurt feelings aside and focus on what is really important, and that is protecting the health and safety of our tenants and delivering on affordability for the people of Alberta who need child care.

You know, if you want me to say, “Sorry that I hurt your feelings,” so that we can get on to doing the work that’s really important that this committee committed to doing, then I’m willing to do that. But to throw a temper tantrum like this and cancel the work of the committee just because some feathers were ruffled is way out of proportion. You guys really need to keep perspective on what’s important here.

The Chair: Any other comments? I see Member Renaud’s hand, but I think that’s from before.

Ms Renaud: You’re correct.

The Chair: Okay.

Seeing no other discussion, I will put the question before the committee. All those in favour in the room? Anyone opposed in the room? All those in favour joining us online? Anyone opposed joining us online?

The motion is carried.

Are there any other comments, discussions?

Seeing none, I think members have completed their deliberation. I would invite Ms Robert if she has any comments.

Ms Robert: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Given that the committee has passed a motion to not report to the Assembly, that’s what I was going to talk about, there’s nothing that I need to say.

Thanks.

The Chair: I see. Okay. Thank you.

With that, we will move on to other business. Are there any other items for discussion under other business?

Seeing none, the next meeting of the committee is scheduled for Tuesday, October 28, 2025, with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations.

At this point I will call for a motion to adjourn. Would a member move that the October 21, 2025, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be adjourned? All in favour?

Member Schmidt, I saw your hand earlier.

Mr. Schmidt: Oh. Sorry. I thought you were asking for a motion to adjourn.

The Chair: Okay. It’s moved.

All in favour? Joining us online, all in favour? Anyone opposed in the room? Online? Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 9:30 a.m.]

